



# The Genocide Education Project

February 20, 2016

Instructional Quality Commission  
1430 N Street, Suite #5111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: History-Social Science Framework

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for your work on revising the History-Social Science framework, particularly the section on the Armenian Genocide. We're pleased with the additional language in the new draft, which provides the necessary background and rationale for including the Armenian Genocide in the curriculum. We urge you to also include information about the Armenian Genocide's connection to the Holocaust, as well as to U.S. History, in grades 10 & 11 respectively.

As we recommended in our letter of November 30, 2015:

1. In keeping with the framework's intention of encouraging analytical thinking about the intersection of personal interests, power, human rights, and civic engagement, we propose adding the following text on or near page 471, line 958:

*Teachers should guide students in an examination of the meaningful links between the Armenian Genocide during WWI and the Holocaust, during WWII. Austrian-Jewish lawyer, Rafael Lemkin, invented the word "genocide" and led the campaign for its criminalization in response to the lack of accountability and reparation for the Armenian Genocide. Emboldened by this lack of accountability, Adolf Hitler said to his generals on the eve of their invasion of Poland, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Numerous German military officers who had been stationed in Turkey during WWI, were aware of the Ottoman regime's plan to destroy the Armenians, and some of them even issued orders for the deportation of Armenians. Without penalty, some later became leaders within the Nazi military apparatus that carried out the Holocaust.*

2. The scope and extent of the American humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide was huge, unprecedented, and has been virtually un-replicated since that time, making it an important part of U.S. History and an effective vehicle to convey key goals of the framework, including "...students should evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to address social and political problems... analyze historical and contemporary means of changing societies, promoting the common good... deepen their appreciation for civic virtues, etc." We propose the addition of the following language to the Grade Eleven: United States History and Geography section, beginning on or near Line 349 of Page 521:

*Wilson's grave concerns regarding the first modern era genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government of the Ottoman Empire against their Armenian subjects was reflected in one of his Fourteen Points, which proposed: "...the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development..."*

*With the end of the war, Wilson was heralded as a hero in Europe when he traveled there to attend the Paris Peace Conference. Despite his significant role in designing the Versailles Treaty, which ended the war, Wilson ultimately could not convince Congress to join the League of Nations.*

*The events of World War I also solidified a new movement within civil society to advocate for international aid and provide humanitarian aid to people in other countries. The American Red Cross established its first international aid project in the wake of the Turkish massacres of 200,000 Armenians in the 1890's, and Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, even travelled to Constantinople to try to persuade Ottoman authorities to stop the violence against Armenians.*

*WWI further transformed the scale of international humanitarian aid efforts carried out by Americans. This was exemplified by the creation of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, later incorporated by an act of Congress in 1919 and renamed Near East Relief. Through an unprecedented publicity campaign across the U.S., Near East Relief raised over \$116,000,000 — equivalent to nearly two billion dollars today — and provided food, clothing, medical treatment, and shelter to genocide survivors, including 132,000 children, who were raised and educated in orphanages across the region. The refrain, "Remember the starving Armenians," became commonplace in American households at the time, demonstrating this new interest in using American economic strength to help others in faraway places.*

Including this additional text helps further develop critical thinking skills as students study the link between major events of the two world wars and extraordinary undertaking of the U.S. response to the Armenian Genocide. We

would thus be providing a strong lesson in positive, active global citizenship to effect lasting change.

Thank you for having taken action to correct and improve the framework language. We ask that you consider these additional improvements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roxanne M." followed by a stylized "M".

Roxanne Makasdjian  
Founder, Member of the Board of Directors